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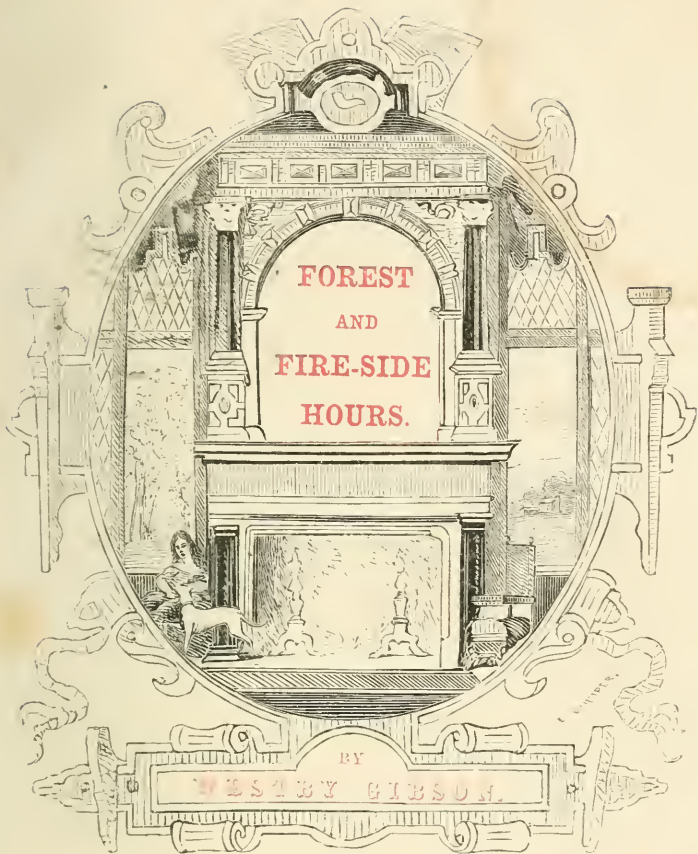


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FOREST
AND
FIRESIDE HOURS.

Poems.

BY
WESTBY GIBSON.

LONDON:
AYLOTT & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW;
AND
T. H. REES, ALDINE CHAMBERS.

1853.

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TO

RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES, ESQ., M.P.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

HIS KINDNESS AND ENCOURAGEMENT,

THIS

Little Book of Poems

IS

GRATEFULLY AND RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

863957

P R E F A C E.

My first literary venture, albeit a small one, is now launched on the sea of public opinion, for "foul weather or fair;" either to be shaken and "split," or "tight and yare, and bravely-rigged," to keep on her way merrily. Many favourable opinions and good wishes of friends known and unknown, go with it, like fair winds and flowing waves—auguries of a prosperous voyage, and that good fortune which may tempt me again and again to venture, not, however, with such small craft, but with swelling argosies, until I become really "strong in the sea." Of results so rare, I am not sanguine; but I have hope to meet with a fair measure of success; and if, on the contrary, I achieve but failure, I shall not be discouraged from making a second attempt, as early as expedient and practicable.

Some years since, under the *nom de plume* of "*A Sherwood Forest Youth*," I made an unsuccessful attempt to bring out a volume of my Early Poems, many of which had appeared in magazines with very flattering editorial introductions. I was compelled, however, to abandon it when it had reached a goodly height of promise—troubles having come in my way, "not singly, but in battalions," making dreary havoc for a time of the sunny fields of Imagination, and the earnest onsets of Hope. From that mass of verse I have selected a few of my best Poems, preferring those which have not hitherto been given to the public eye.

The present volume, therefore, comprises Poems written before my twenty-third or twenty-fourth year, and under circumstances of no ordinary difficulty—chiefly during my first rough experiences in that Great Wilderness which (unknown to friend or relative) I entered in my eighteenth year, after a long winter's walk of nearly two hundred miles, through ceaseless rain and fog—without a single acquaintance in all that vast congeries of stony arteries—without the power of labouring at my wonted trade; but with the solitary equivalent of one night's balmy or unbalmy rest, and with a vague strong fancy upon me, that, Aladdin-like, I should light upon something which, with a little energetic rubbing, would bring me, if not the riches of the mine, assuredly something more than the feast of the Barmecide. In those days, Poetry was to me truly, "the bliss of solitude," though powerless to remove or soften the imperious wants of this lower-life. Of nearly thirty poems then printed in goodly corners, only in one instance, did I discover that the article "verse" had really a market-value, could be fairly measured, and, *mirabile dictu*, could find its way into a receipt-slip—(an unstamped one!) Poor Poesy! divinely-born, and wondrously-nourished with ambrosia and the inspiring nectar—feaster with the gods! what need to trouble thee with earthy considerations about daily bread and shelter from the elements.

"and such small deers." "Thy mind to thee a kingdom is!" and is not that sufficient?

Since these Poems were written, I have been far from idle in my leisure-hours—Poetry can flourish amid wild wind and whelming rain, though its branches may grow with knot and gnarl in them, and the leaves may put forth a deeper hue. I hope ere long to be enabled to bring out a volume of later Poems: "*Phoebe, or the Spirit of May Eve, &c.*"—a five-act drama, "*The Sisters*"—and an extensive series of Essays upon Biblical History and Antiquities, Mythology, and Folk-Lore, upon which I have been deeply engaged for years.

I may further be permitted to say, that with me, Literature is the pleasure, not the business of life. For twelve years have I been a hard-worker in one of those gloomy old City-offices where much business is done, but not in the commodities of Sunlight and Air—a place buried among high walls, where only in one or two weeks of the year, and at a certain time of the day, and through one corner only of an inner-window, can the Sun shoot a direct shaft of light, printing upon my desk a golden fleck of glory, that trembles, and wavers like some bright bewildered spirit chance-strayed into Hades—a place filled with the dust and fume of dye-goods, that have little power to call up visions of the shining champains of India, or the fruitful valleys of Guatemala.

It is mine to mingle daily with those whose minds are of "business" all-compact; to whom the knowledge of my far-away Forest-dreams and Fireside Fancies will, I dare say, give me all at once the semblance of an insubstantial spirit—some "gay creature of the element," instead of that real substance, erst quick at the pen, dexterous at figures, and bound for so long a time to the dead wood of the desk. Nevertheless, I can say, and with truth, that the fascinations of Literature have never yet caused me to neglect any of the ordinary duties of life—airy pleasures have never yet interfered with the weightier claims of business—the hour of seven has always been as a barrier between two lives: the Clerk's, the Student's! And further, so close has been this application to business, that in all those years, my deep love for the beauties of Nature has not been enriched by even one holiday-ramble to the dear old places that rest so pleasantly in my memory—the scenes of my 'prentice-days among the hills of North Staffordshire, by the windings of the Trent—of my boyhood, in green and lovely Leicestershire, so full of fruitful fields and running waters, and varied landscapes of forest and wold—or of my birth and childhood, in a village of "Old Sherwood," where my grandfather's stories of the "merrie outlaws," first set me wondering, and dreaming dreams.

Thus much I have thought fitting to say of myself, in putting forth my little volume (haply the first of many); full of grateful pleasure in reviewing the kind encouragement given to me; and with an increasing hope that for me and "mine"—"Time and the hours *have* run through the roughest day!"

WESTBY GIBSON.

12, Catherine Street, Strand,
December, 1852.

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* * Nos. v. and xi. were printed in a Magazine in 1844. No. xiv. appeared in the *Literary Gazette*, in September, 1842, and is now printed as altered in 1844. The other Poems are given to the public for the first time.

P O E M S .

HELEN.

NIGHT is waning ! a crimson glory
Burns in the grey-dark Eastern sky ;
Shadows are fleeting ; starlight and moonlight
Trembling, vanish, for Day is nigh !
Hushed is that soft delicious music,
Showering the broad heavens with delight,
Poured from a bird's heart, full and fervent,
Poised in the moonlit air all night ;
Heard like a spirit-voice, singing above,
Bringing sweet tidings of comfort and love,
When, restless and heart-sick, for sleep we pray.

Morning ! the light hath burst its fountains,
Flooding the dim grey clouds ; and they shine
Golden, and red, and empurpled : the Heavens
Are filled with great glories, all-divine !

Sunrise ! the land, in its wondrous beauty,
Strikes on the sense like a world new-born—
All summers of Eden thronging upon us
In one sweet hour of the early morn !
The white mists die on the wide brown wold ;
The dewy forest is steeped in gold ;
Like fire shines the river a league away.

All things arise from the bonds of slumber,
Out of the mystic world of dreams—
Life in a myriad shapes is stirring,
But *one* glad impulse in *all* there seems :
Hark to the lark, (high spirit and earnest !)
Gone from her nest in the lowly ground ;
Sweetly binding the earth and the heavens
In one great circle of rapturous sound ;
And the soft low croon of the woodland dove,
Brooding over the dear life of love,
Early and late, through the calm summer hours.

How pleasantly mingle the sylvan voices
Of birds, quick—darting from tree to tree ;
And round the white cups of the wild-rose hovering,
His merry small trumpet sounds the bee ;
Along the meadows run murmuring noises
Of waters, babbling as they fall

Down to dim hollows, hard by the woodland,
 That hums through its branches, one and all—
 Stirred by light airs, that fitfully blow
 From windy uplands, through valleys low,
 Mingling the odours of all sweet flowers.

Helen hath risen—her heart in a tremble—
 Her eyes soft-drooping in tearful gleams;
 Again night's phantasy ponders she over,
 For Love was the lord of all her dreams!
 Ah! little her struggling thought remembers,
 But shadowy glimpses of some sweet clime,
 Like realm of Faerie, inviolate ever,
 Charm'd from the wizard touch of Time,
 Where hopes and desires, too rich for this earth,
 Hung round her ripe harvests—a wondrous birth
 Of pleasures undying, bright, and whole.

Fain would she recall words, loving-earnest,
 (The voice of a heart to her own heart dear!)
 Haunting her still, like distant music,
 Coming and going upon the ear.
 Ah! Love to thy bosom hath stolen, sweet Helen,
 Stirring its deeps with a lordly power;
 Like the life in the rosebud thrilling and burning
 Soon to burst forth—a glorious flower!

Thy soft-beaming smiles, and pensive sighs,
Are born of that balmy heaven, which lies
Warm-brooding on thine entrancéd soul.

Thy Maytime of girlhood is waning, dear Helen,
Into Life's passionate Summer it dies ;
And oh ! from thy pure and gentle spirit,
Love-charm'd, what issues of beauty *may* rise !—
Balm-breathing mercies, angel charities,
Pleasures unfailing, affections sweet,
Springing up, like the flowers of Eden,
Around Life's weary-wandering feet.
O the time that is coming seems pleasant to thee,
But ah ! *who* knoweth how sad it may be ;
For joy is a vapour, and Love but a breath !

Rapt in sweet reverie, hearing no warning,
All things yield to thee omens bright,
That thy days like the Summer's shall softly mingle,
Evening and morning, without a night :
Thy soul going forth, like happy Ariel,
Living a sweet life under the flowers,
And circling the world, at her own wild pleasure,
With a bright ring of delightful hours—
How lovely the future, fond dreamer, to thee,
But ah ! *none* knoweth how dark it may be,
For Life ever lies in the shadow of Death !

Dear Helen, fond dreamer! she opens her casement,
Shaking the dew in showers from the leaves
Of woodbines, clinging with loving clusters
And balmy trails, from the porch to the eaves:
She looketh forth—a morning of Summer
In all its beauty bursts on her sight!
O'er her sweet face, the leaf-shadows tremble,
With twinkling spots of the golden light;
The warm winds wooingly round her blow,
Breathing rich odours, and murmuring low,
Coming, and going, and lingering long!

White-shining sun-streaks, and melting shadows,
Dreamily wander along the land;
The hills in their purple and steadfast beauty,
Shutting it in upon either hand,
Like some bright spot from the rough world hidden,
That far in the palmy Orient lies:
So deep a quiet broods over the landscape;
Such airy sweet noises people the skies;
A yearning impulse beats at her heart,
Her happy thoughts into utterance start;
Her soul out-gushes in rapturous song!

She sings—and the sun grows high in the heavens,
The hours steal by her on noiseless feet;

Her voice, in thrilling impassioned measures,
 Pouring forth music, angel-sweet.
— But ah! her song is suddenly ended;
 The light grows dark in her full blue eye;
Something of evil hath breath'd upon her,
 She trembles like one about to die;
There's a sharp wild pain at her heart—and her eyes
Are filled with tears, and she moans, and cries—
 “ Ah me! I am dying—all alone!”

Alone and dying, alas! poor Helen!
 The nearest house is a mile away;
And none may bring to thee help or comfort
 Through all the long long summer-day;
Hard by, is the dark and lonesome forest;
 The wide wold opening behind and before;
And seldom up through the quiet meadows
 Cometh a traveller to the door;
“ Oh! none can hear me, ah me!” she cries,
While the tears rain fast from her darkening eyes,
 “ I am dying! alone! alone!”

Wearily creepeth the time, O wearily!
 And ever her face is thrilled with pain,
Her sad gaze turned to the happy morning,
 Hoping—yet feeling all hope is vain!

No one cometh, and nought she seeth,
But the white pool and the shining river,
The twinkling gleams of the windy meadow,
The tall grey poplars waving ever,
And her garden—that fairy nook of flowers!
Ah, never more in the twilight hours,
By his side in sweet talk may she linger there!

No one cometh, and nought she heareth,
But the wind in the fluttering leaves;
The throstle high on the elm bough singing,
The swallows twittering under the eaves;
And the happy bees in the flower-beds swarming,
Or humming her chamber round and round,
With wearying noise—her sense bewildering!
Vainly she listens for human sound!
Alas! all hope from her heart is flying—
No one cometh, and she is dying—
Breathing her last to heaven in prayer.

O sad it seems thus to die, sweet Helen,
To pass in thy youthful prime away;
The world of summer around thee smiling,
Thine heart growing happier every day;
All thy sweet graces and virgin-beauties,
Low in the cold dark grave to hide;

Nor Love's fond looks, nor the voice of gladness,
Turning the arrow of doom aside.
"O surely the world goeth *wrong!*" we cry,
"For all that is fairest is first to die,
And why—ah me! 'tis mystery all!"

Yet may it be well that so soon, sweet Helen,
The golden sands of thy life are run;
For now, if long memories crowd on thy spirit,
Of all thou hast felt, and thought, and done,
In the years flown by, 'tis a vision of beauty,
Bearing no shadow—no stain of sin;
Thou shalt hear at the gate of Heaven, untrembling,
The still small voice, saying "Enter in!"
"O truly the world goeth *right!*" we cry,
"'Tis a merciful thing thus early to die
Ere the evil shadows on life can fall."

At shut of day, when the showers were over,
We found her dead by the fallen chair;
All afternoon, the sharp gusts flying,
Had blown the rain through her golden hair;
But the moonlight falling—softly falling—
Trembling, kissed her dear lips and eyes;
Her white hands were folded—for prayers had taken
Her angel-spirit into the skies!

Ah me ! 'twas a sad and bitter sight !
And all through that long, and bitter night
Nothing was heard but sob and moan.

Oh ! never more may the old sweet accents
Make a fond mother's heart rejoice !
Never more may her eyes beam softly
Dear answers to *one* deep earnest voice !
She is gone, like a flower for Earth unfitted—
Its sweetness yet in the breathing bud—
To flourish anew, in immortal beauty,
Where all things are perfect-sweet and good ;
Whilst, blinded with tears, through all the long night,
We moan to each other, heart-broken quite,
Wishing that our life too were flown.

(1845.)

THE HARVEST-GLEANING.

'Tis fifty years, next harvest-moon—
How fondly I remember,
Dear wife, that sunny afternoon—
That sweet time of September !
I saw thee—beams of glowing light
(Soft shadows intervening)
Made thy bright face more rosy-bright
While in the harvest gleaning.

All day, among the shining corn
My gaze to thee was turning :
O day of days ! the love new-born
In every vein was burning !
Thy gentle voice, in song, I heard
Sweet as the dove's, at e'ening ;
And all my soul, in rapture, stirred
While in the harvest-gleaning.

We saw the harvest-moon arise,
In seas of rosy splendour :
A richer light was in our eyes—
A presence warm and tender :
The few words trembling on the tongue,
Dear wife, how full their meaning ;
For aye ! the bells rang blythe ere long,
After that harvest-gleaning.

O ! blessings on all summer-hours,
And such sweet harvest-weather—
Knitting two fond young hearts, like ours,
In Love's bright bonds together :
For hath not Love, dear wife of mine,
Still on my bosom leaning,
Made all the dark years brighter shine,
Since that old harvest-gleaning !

We've shared these fifty long long years,
Our pleasure and our sorrow ;
We still may mingle smiles and tears
Till one soon-coming morrow :
And then—O would that both might die,
From earth our fancies weaning,
And go, where Heaven's bright harvests lie,
For our eternal gleaning.

THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

AUTUMN is with us ! from the yellow woods
Fitfully steals a solemn dirge-like sound,
That pauses oft, and oft with louder swell
Recurring, takes perforce the ear of man,
Telling of change, of Summer days gone by,
When different was the sound in forests heard,
While the long lingering breezes from the hills
Swept down upon the multitudinous leaves
With a deep dreamy music sweet to hear.

Autumn, wild Autumn, to the earth is come,
And the earth seems, with melancholy tongue,
To cry at the stern spirit's desolate path
Through her fair realms—o'er the wide airy wolds,
And shadowy hollows, and high sylvan slopes,
And tracts of harvest in the southwind swaying
With long, bright, sealike ripples, miles away ;

And flowery glades, where happy Summer came
Erewhile, and lapt in reverie sweet, lived o'er
The balmy labours of her time again—
All dreary now!—So plaintive is the sound
In the sere rustling boughs, of sighing winds
Wandering forlorn: so like a voice of trouble,
That in old time, the Pagan's heart had thrilled
In the still night to hear it, like the moan
Of spirits of the woods, sobbing aloud
For the dark ruin fall'n on all sweet nooks,
Fragrant with flowers, and hung with twilight dim,
Where they abode the pleasant Summer through.

But otherwise, thoughtful, interpret we
Nature's deep language, full of meanings stern,
And fervent prophecies, forewarning us
Of Autumn days to come on mortal life!

All Summer's glory wanes—fast going down
Into the dust, and the sweet flowers are few;
For the meek sunbeams fail as heretofore
To woo their balmy spirits forth, and charm
The bud of night to a fair morning flower.
Aye! few and dying! the swift withering blight
Stains the white leaf; the purple groweth pale,
And hourly the rich life doth steal away
From every fragrant herb and forest bough!
And, day by day, the Autumn tints prevail—

Purple, and red, and golden ; for the Year
Royally puts her richest splendours on
When Autumn calls her down into her grave—
How unlike aught that man conceives of death ;
And yet how like the brilliant hue that burns
On some young cheek, (the sunset-flush of life !)
Cheating awhile a mother's yearning heart,
When wistfully she bends o'er that sweet form
She thought so much of—ah ! the fond false dream !
She feels that death is coming, and e'en now
Knocks at the door, and brooketh no delay !

How thick the fallen leaves lie underfoot,
And fast and faster every gust bears down
The stricken multitudes, and swells the heap :
When the wind dies, some, all too frail to hold
Upon the bough, loosen and gently drop,
Fluttering aloof awhile, as loth to leave
Their airy birthplace ; even as in old age
Man clings to earth, and fain would linger still.
And evermore the little whirlwinds rise,
And swirl the dead leaves round and round the trees
With a wild weird music, that to hear
Makes sad indeed, till higher mood of thought,
Trumpet-like, rouse the faint and trembling heart,
Calming the troubled waters, as the breath
Of some great spirit thrilled through all our being.

Surely it is Heaven's doing ! for we hear
Sweet eloquent tongues replying evermore
In loving parley, to each questioning thought,
To which the world—the rough and giddy world—
Gives mocking answers ; and a solemn awe
Gathers upon us ; some mysterious sense,
Beyond our life, makes revelation sweet
Of some bright angel walking by our side,
As in old time, and like a true good friend,
Soothing our fretful spirits with his smiles,
Breaking the threatening cloud into sweet showers,
And on the falling drops, with hand of light,
Painting the rainbow—sign of Love undying !
Death's shadowy Fear turning to calm bright Hope !
For Life's fine vanities rebuking us,
And wanton waste of the short precious hours,
When oft-times his sweet voice hath called us back
To the happy valleys, where not yet dried up
The Eden waters comfort the fallen Earth :
And while in eloquent strain he breathes of Time,
And Change, and our Life's end, he leads us on
To where, close on the borders of this world,
Heavengate wide-open stands for evermore.

(1845.)

MAY.

I.

THE sweetest days of spring-time come
 With the opening morn of May ;
But the pleasant pipe, and humming drum
 Greet not the glowing Day !
We are blythe of heart, but not with the heart
 Of the golden Olden-time,
When Prince and Peasant alike took part
 In the merry morrice-mime :
When the hillside rang with shout and laugh,
 And the forester's wildwood-song ;
And even Old Age, with twirling staff,
 Would dance in the Mayday throng—
When Love, conspiring with child-like Mirth,
Waylaid the ancient Lord of Earth,
 Entangling his wings with flowers ;
And muffling his scythe in leafy bands ;
And snatching the glass from his nerveless hands,
Wilfully shook the warm bright sands,
 Bewildering the warning Hours !

II.

To the silent fields, in the early morn
 We go not a-Maying now,
 To gather rich spoils of the shining thorn,
 And the yellow oaken bough—
 Through the dark old woods, 'ere the foraging rook
 Flaps out of his windy nest ;
 While the doe still sleeps in her ferny nook,
 With the dew on her star-bright breast—
 By the moonlit marsh, and the moorland stream,
 Where the richest wild flowers blow—
 Returning 'ere twilight's pearly gleam,
 Half-hid in the vernal show :
 With dewy branches the May-pole to bind,
 And startle the sunshine and drowsy wind
 With streamers and garlands gay.
 No more—now the good old custom's dead—
 Shall the clustered blooms of spring-time shed
 Their balmy odours on one bright head
 In the crown of the Queen of the May !

III.

That wildwood-life of the May is o'er,
 With the golden olden-time—
 (It may shine in the scholar's dusty lore,
 And ring in the minstrel's rhyme!)

But a spirit as earnest still beams in the eyes
Of the child by the forest-springs ;
And wakens the song where the shuttle flies,
And the busy hammer rings ;
'Tis felt as the grey-haired grandame turns
The wheel with its whispering thread—
In the flush on her wrinkled cheek that burns,
And the tear-drop silently shed ;
It lives in the maiden's shadowless smile,
As she dreameth her day-dreams, and ever the while
Doth some sweet name repeat :
The dweller afar, on the waste wide sea ;
The pilgrim asleep by the sycamore-tree,
And the exile—are filled, bright spirit, by thee
With visions and memories sweet.

IV.

O fairest of all those guardian-powers,
That since Time's Eden-birth,
Have led the dark and the shining Hours
About the changing Earth—
Heaven greets thee with smiles, O beautiful May !
The sunny seals of his love
Rest softly on Earth, till the fountains of Day
Have silently ceased above.

Thy voice is all music—a pleasant rhyme
 That is married to some sweet tune!—
 From the lapse of the rainy April-time,
 To the rosy break of June.
 How lovely thy golden morning-calms,
 As spirits were soothing with gentle palms
 The fret and the fever of Life;—
 Thy bounteous evenings of balmy dew—
 Thy solemn nights, when the soul may renew
 Her heavenly armour and weapon true,
 For the world's unceasing strife.

v.

Come forth! let us ramble in thoughtful mood,
 Through the glowing mid-day hours;
 Where the sweet South shakes from the blossoming woods
 The pearly and perfumed showers—
 Through the tangled coppice, whose boughs have burst
 Into sprays of purple and gold,
 As a spirit of Autumn still were nursed
 In each subtle and fairy fold,
 To nooks where the water-leaves lazily lie,
 And the chiming bubbles break;
 And glades, where the primrose's gentle eye
 Seems pensive for Love's sweet sake—
 Or sit 'neath the virgin banner of Spring,
 Round whose brown standard the bindweeds cling

With flowers like the full May-moon ;
Where the woodbines lavish their fragrant store ;
And the wilding rose, from its golden core,
Loosens its rich leaves evermore
In the lightest breath of noon:

VI.

Come forth ! over all the land around
Sweet murmurs mingle and meet,
With the click of the loom, and the hammer's sound,
In the hidden village street ;
There's a whisper of leaves on the shadowy hills,
And below, sings the merry mill-stream ;
And the wood-pigeon's voice that the solitude fills
A spirit of Love doth seem ;
The blackbird's challenge comes loud and high
To the thrush in the hollow dells ;
And a voice (Spring's sweetest !) is heard in the sky,
As of two soft-shaken bells.
And hark ! a shout from the heart of May,—
Of childhood, gathering flowers all day,
Leaf-crowned, like a sylvan chief ;
Or searching for elf-stones, and quaint country things—
The black bee belted with "three" bright rings ;
The feather that "once was a fairy-king's ;"
And the "white lady" hid in a leaf.

VII.

All things that have motion and breath, are heard
At thy coming, O May, to rejoice ;
But sweeter than cry of beast or bird,
Is the happy human voice !
Let our souls be filled, as the hours flit by,
With youthful and thoughtful delight ;
Ere the shadow comes down the shining sky,
Or the storm on the stilly night !
And remember, the riches of harvest are won
From the stir in the soft spring-blade ;
And the ripe fruit swells to the August sun,
From the blossoms that quickly fade :
So the flower-like fancies and feelings rife
In the earnest and passionate days of Life—
In the spirit's glowing May ;
Unlike to blossoms by East-winds caught,
Whose palmy promise slips down to nought—
Shall yield rich treasures of fruitful thought
For the wild dark Winter's day.

(1844.)

THE FLOWER IN THE BOOK.

CHILD.

TELL me, O tell me, my mother dear,
In many a lonely and silent hour,
Why, buried in thought, do I hear you sigh;
And sometimes I see a tear in your eye,
Whilst gazing on that old withered flower!
Oh, mother, it makes my heart ache to see
Your dear sweet face with so sad a look:
Ah! there's something that troubles, something that
grieves—
A mystery to me—in the dry dead leaves
Of the flower in the book.

O, fling it away, my mother dear,
Why keep such a crushed and withered thing?
I'll bring you the sweetest wild flowers, for I know
Where the violets down in the hollows grow,
And the primrose shines by the forest spring.

I'll make you, dear mother, a posey sweet,
And then you will kiss me, and smiling look ;
For there's nothing that troubles, nothing that grieves,
In their rich dewy cups, as in the dead leaves
Of the flower in the book.

MOTHER.

O bless thee, my child, for thy loving thought,
But little of life can thy young heart know—
How a simple flower may bring tears to the eyes,
And the saddest and tenderest feelings arise,
With thoughts of the years that are gone long-ago !
O, I could not part with these few dead leaves
For a balmy cluster fresh from the brook ;
For memories troubled, and memories bright,
Ever thrill my heart through, at the sad-sweet sight
Of the flower in the book.

'Twas thy father gathered this flower, my child,
A treasure sweet to thy baby-eye !
But it withered soon—and thy father died—
Heart-broken, I too could have lain by his side ;
But for thy dear sake—Oh ! I could not die !

And now, oftimes, in these lonely years,
 On a relic so precious I love to look :
 For memories troubled, and memories bright,
 Ever thrill my heart through at the sad-sweet sight
 Of the flower in the book !

(1845.)

SABBATH-DAYS.

THESE Sabbath-days are shining clues to Heaven !
 The overflow of Mercy ! wide-thrown doors
 Into Joy's house ! sweet wayside shelters given
 When round our path forlorn Life's tempest roars !
 Smiles of Eternity ! flowers in Time's dust !
 Armour-of-proof beneath our pilgrim-guise !
 Luxuriant banquets after six days' crust !
 Foretastes of Heaven ! true dreams of Paradise !
 Fair garden walks—which, leaving for a time,
 Breaths of sweet air about us lingering play—
 Whence we may bear, as from the Eden-clime
 Poor Adam might have yearned, some balmy flower away.

(1842.)

SUMMER AND SORROW.

COME forth, while Summer, like a spirit, lies
In balmy slumber, dreaming happy dreams,—
Bright pageants flitting by her tranced eyes,
Born of dim shadows, and soft wave-like gleams.
Come forth ! for soon shall the wild Autumn rise,
And swell with gusty rains the forest-streams,
And fill the hollow dells with dreary sound,
 And strew with leaves the cold wet ground—
Leaves by his fiery fingers all embrowned !
And, with a touch, seal up, in one short night,
The flowers, those fairy-fountains of delight !
The summer-flowers, so sweet, so pure, so bright !

Come, gentlest, let us press with eager feet
The glistening sod, yet rich with leaf and flower ;
Come, for Life's pleasures are but few and fleet ;
And Change doth brood o'er all with subtle power :
Time is the Lord of all things fair and sweet—
He hath his will, each swift and flying hour ;

And be it solemn Night, or busy Day—
 December dark, or shining May—
His wizard-hand beckons our Joys away
Into the dreary gardens of the Past :
Yet let them vanish, flower-like, ere so fast,
We are merry-hearted, dearest, while they last.

'Tis true, our Life is but to come and go—
We take instinctively our baby-breath ;
A step among dim perils, quick or slow,
And unawares we meet the angel Death :
We cannot parry the all-dreaded blow ;
'Twere vain to gainsay whatsoe'er he saith ;
For, having breathed the air of Time, we die—
 The source and end of Life so nigh,
It seems, when gone, the twinkling of an eye ;
Yet is there space for Pleasure, if for Grief—
For smiles *and* tears ! Although the time is brief,
The rose can flourish with the cypress-leaf.

Come to the glowing fields, and forests dark
With leafy Summer ! from the world's dread strife,
Child-like, to Mother Nature, come, and hark !
A myriad sounds with Love and Gladness rife !
See, how beneath the gnarled and mossy bark,
Trembles and throbs the earnest Spirit of Life !

Soft starry leaves, and flowers, and fruitage bright,
 Wrestling in turn, with gentle might,
'Gainst slow decay, sharp blast, and heat, and blight.
Let Nature thrill thy soul with richest powers ;
So thoughtful Joys may crown Life's darkest hours,
And fruits eternal rise from Earthly flowers !

Come, where thy tearful eyes shall cease to trace,
Far off, the dreary gleam of one white stone :
Stay not indoors, beside that vacant place,
And for the lost one wearily sigh and moan :
Is there not still bright life in that dear face ?
Hath not that gentle voice more heavenly grown ?
Sitting, like one of every hope forlorn—

 Thy soul of all its splendour shorn—
Thy foolish tears do blind thee, night and morn !
Thou wilt not Summer's glorious tidings hear,
Nor see, foreshadowed by the bright mid-year,
The ceaseless Summer of the lost and dear !

O come ! let Nature to each sense reveal
Her bounteous riches—all her wonders show :
Thine heart shall soon the old pulse of gladness feel,
When airs, Heaven-willed, about thee freshly blow ;
And on thy doubts, the sweet belief shall steal
Of Love and Joy, past mortal sense to know ;

The film shall fall from thy long-darkened eyes ;
 Thou shalt not waste thyself in sighs ;
Thy soul in glowing strength again shall rise ;
The hours shall calmly pass—aye ! it shall be
As if the Angels walked and talked with thee,
Making, in Time, bright touches of Eternity !

(1844.)

THE SLAVE-TRADE.

O FOR a voice of power, whose fervent sound
Should thrill all hearts, till loud o'er land and wave
Swelled the deep chorus to Earth's utmost bound—
“Freedom to all, and Justice to the Slave!”
Rousing the nations from their shameful sleep
To noble warfare 'gainst the Evil Thing—
The curse of Slavery from the earth to sweep :
O'ershadowed by the Almighty's awful wing,
Fired by His Spirit—haply soon to smite
The fearful Sin to dust, vanquished, and slain outright !

The vile Slave-traffic ! O what words can paint
The loathsome horrors of so sad a theme ;
Making the very soul grow sick and faint,
Like one oppressed by some terrific dream.

No dream, alas! no fiction of the brain!
Still, as of old, we see Sin's hateful brood,
Mammon and Moloch, flushed with triumph reign—
Their world-wide altars steeped in human blood:
The soul, amazed, deems all Hell's raging powers,
For tenfold havoc, loosed on this fair world of ours!

Alas! that man in his base lust for gold,
Fierce and remorseless, feasts on human spoils—
Nursing the Fiery Sin, that uncontrolled
In his dark bosom, like a serpent, coils.
When shall Truth's heavenly light chase from each land
This dismal cloud! How long, O God, how long
Shall these things be, ere Thine all-righteous hand
Set loose the captive, and undo this wrong;
Even as of old, in Israel's hour of need,
From Pharaoh's iron yoke thy chosen ones were freed!

Why thus doth man oppress his fellow! why
Trample upon him, as a reptile base;
Scoff at Thy warnings, and Thy power defy,
Who mad'st all nations of the Earth *one* race!
The Form Divine is stamped on every mind;
The birthright, Liberty, belongs to all:
Yet doth man seize Thine handiwork, and bind
The free-born limb, and hold in hideous thrall

The immortal soul—by Tyranny and Lust,
Chains and the scourge, brought low—e'en to the very
dust.

Yet 'tis for this, man to Thy Word appeals,
Wresting its shining Truths to some foul lie—
Spurning the Law which saith of him that steals
And sells his fellow, he shall surely die !
Aye ! and these deeds in Christian lands are done,
Even in Thy Name, O God of Truth and Right !
False hireling priests (betraying thy dear Son)
Thus darken the bright rays of Gospel light !
Profane Thine Altars ; and in impious mirth,
Baptise the crouching slave to swell his market-worth.

Brave hearts and true ! how have they torn the veil
From these sad scenes of misery and wrong !
East, West, South, North—told the appalling tale
In fiery tones, in language stern and strong !
O that I too could with bold faithful hand,
In their dark hues, these ruffian-deeds portray ;
Show foul ships haunting many a Southern strand,
Hungering for human cargoes night and day,
By fraud and violence won. O sickening gain,
Making men raging fiends, and blood to fall like rain !

How sad thy doom, O Africa ! since first
The curse of Slavery was loosed on thee ;
And, like a dire and withering Plague, it burst
Through all thy mystic realms from sea to sea.
How have thy children fall'n ! by their own kings
(Made fierce and drunken) hunted down by night—
Towns set on fire, to seize the wretch that springs
Out of his blazing home, half-dead with fright ;
And hundreds slain in blind and savage fray,
That some poor captured few might be the Slaver's prey.

How are they driven down in fettered bands,
A thousand miles to that crime-blackened shore,
Through desert woods, and o'er vast burning sands,
Home-sick, heart-broken, fainting evermore !
Well may they fall, crushed by the heart's keen strife,
On that dread journey ! better far the grave,
Than to drag on a wasting Death-in-Life,
Both soul and body doomed—the white man's slave !
The spirit palsied with foul shame and wrong ;
Torture, disease, and toil, their lot their whole life long.

Vain are your wrathful cries— your prayers as vain !
Dark sons of Afric, ye are bought and sold—
Branded your writhing limbs ; the blood-wrought chain
Binding ye down, crammed in the black ship's hold.

Grow mad with anguish! woman, sob and moan
 For thy lost babes—lift up a terrible cry!
 Think ye 'twill soften bosoms hard as stone?
 Break your sad hearts—what matter if ye die?
 One-third safe-brought to the vile human-mart,
 Shall heap his coffers high, and glad the slave-king's heart.

Wild the sea-perils of that felon-bark,
 Becalmed 'neath Tropic skies, that rain down fire;
 Swept by fierce hurricane and tempest dark,
 As if pursued by vengeance swift and dire;
 While maniac-yells, louder than noise of storms,
 Burst from her loathsome bosom, where grim Death
 Feasts in the pestilent air; and ghastly forms
 Mad with their torment gasp for heaven's sweet breath.
 Ah! many a bleeding corpse by morning-light
 Shall feast the ravenous shark close following day and night!

Safe brought to port, this living merchandize
 Put-up for sale, is handled with nice art,
 By keen-eyed traders, chaffering down its price,
 Like butchers, dealing at a cattle-mart.
 O hateful sight! husband and wife and child
 Naked and chained—the gaze of brutal eyes;
 Clasped in each other's arms, with outcry wild,
 Nought but the sharp lash rending life's sweet ties;
 Sold to fierce masters, burnt in face and brow,
 Severed from all ye love—aye! Death were welcome now!

O 'tis indeed a painful task to draw
These truthful pictures of the Negro's life—
These horrid tortures, sanctioned by the Law,
Even though the heart break with the terrible strife!
Toil on, poor slaves—what matter, weak or strong!
If faint with sickness, or with toil outworn,
Ye must be scourged with the thick-knotted thong,
The switch of lancewood, or sharp ebon-thorn;
Nor shall the driver, demon-like in power,
Spare Woman's tender frame in Nature's trying hour!

Like beasts of burden, ye must toil, poor slaves—
Famished, with harvests round you, rich and deep;
Wounded or sick, the o'erwrought body craves,
In vain for rest, or the soft balm of sleep.
Work—work in cane-field, or in damp morass,
That loads the air with sickly poisonous breath;
Through the chill night and burning day, alas!
Dragging Life's burden wearily down to Death:
No Hope! no Comfort! brimmed your Cup of Woe,
Because your skin is black, although Heaven willed it so!

Shall not God visit you for all these things,
Ye Nations, waxing fat and proud with crime—
Rain mischief down, and break the strength of Kings,
As He smote Egypt fiercely in old time?

Hath He not said—His curse shall be on all
That deal in Souls, and that grind down the poor!—
Though slow to wrath, yet may His Vengeance fall
Terribly sudden, and His Arm is sure :
The blood of thousands crieth from the ground—
Think ye His ear is deaf to that wild wailing sound !

O that ye may avert so dread a fate !
Loose then the curse that withers from your land ;
Bind up the Negro's wounds, ere yet too late ;
And greet him with a brother's loving hand ;
Hasten the coming of that happy time,
When the sweet gospel-light shall fill the Earth ;
And all this chaos of dark Wrong and Crime,
Shall pass away, and a new world have birth,
Kindled by Love Divine—o'er land and sea
No man be slave to man—all tribes and nations free !

(1845.)

MARY LEE.

O THIS is not the happy world
That once it seemed to be,
Ere Death had taken her whose love
Made life so sweet to me!
Alas! that all we love the most
So soon should pass away ;
And sorrow crush the joyous heart
In one short fleeting day ;
For never more—O never more,
My Mary's heart shall beat for me ;
I would that my life, too, were o'er,
Sweet Mary Lee !

That last bright morning of her life,
How full of bliss were we :
Like all those happy hours, we thought
The aftertime would be.

Our earnest words, at parting, breathed
Of Love's delightful years ;
And now, her face hath no sweet smile—
And mine is wet with tears.
O tears are vain, for never more
My Mary's heart shall beat for me ;
I would that my life, too, were o'er,
Sweet Mary Lee !

Oftimes her gentle form returns
To memory's yearning eye ;
But soon the lovely vision fades,
And then I long to die :
And oh ! how sweet a calm there steals
Upon my aching heart,
To *feel* myself in that bright land
Where we can never part—
To feel that there for evermore
My Mary's heart shall beat for me ;
O would this weary life were o'er,
Sweet Mary Lee !

(1844.)

THE END OF SUMMER.

How solemn a change over all the land,
From morning to night, through the long calm day—
A spirit hath waved her shadowy hand,
And the glories of Summer are fleeting away!
A keen irresistible sleepless power
Is the Lord of each new-born vassal hour ;
Moving on swift and silent wings,
His burning arrows abroad he flings—
The grey destroyer of all sweet things !
Yet cheating the thought, and dazzling the sense
With gorgeous enchantment and beauty intense—
An awful handwriting, speaking to all,
Of terror and ruin, and darkness drear ;
Like the warning on Babylon's royal wall,
Making the proud heart stagger with fear.

By night, there's a subtle calm in the skies ;
A solemn splendour comes with the morn ;
There are tears in our mother Nature's eyes,
And her voice is tremulous, low, forlorn :

You may hear in the stillness a wailing sound,
Soft flitting along the stubble-ground ;
For the homeless wind is sweeping by,
And a myriad leaves are stricken, and die ;
And, drifting down, in the hollows lie :
Sharply they crinkle under the feet,
Sending up no crushed odours sweet :
O Nature, thy child, the bold bright Year
Will never rally from that weird breath—
Sore-stricken he lies in the moonlight clear,
On a bed of brown leaves, in the garden of Death.

(1845.)

THE SONG OF THE BROKEN BOUGH.

It was a pleasant life of old,
 In the green heart of the wood,
To flourish with my kindred-boughs,
 All rich with leaf and bud ;
Yielding the sultry noon-tide hours,
 A cool and twilight gloom ;
Or, bowing back our leafy crowns,
 Give the bright heavens room
To smile on the free wild natures all,
 Haunting our forest-clime ;
Or feel the fragrant welcome, given
 By the Earth, in her sweet prime—
O the difference to the broken bough,
 Since that delicious time !

What years have passed, since my germ lay hid
In its birth-place, still and dark,
Yearning to break its subtle folds,
And pierce the gnarled bark!
The sap that swelled from root to head,
And every wind that blew,
The rain, (rich largess of the Spring!)
The balmy evening dew,
And the Light—Creation's kindly helps!—
All furnished me with powers;
Enough for the wants of rugged strength—
Enough to nurture flowers,
Whose odours (a sweet waste of Love!)
Should woo the flying Hours.

When the eldest Spirit of the Year
Brought comfort to the land;
And the squirrel and the dormouse broke
From Winter's frosty hand;
Unfolding wide my leafy fans,
And blossoms white as snow,
I cast the old-year's wrinkled leaves
Among the weeds below;
And soon grew dark, and proof against
The summer's fervent heat—

A shelter for the mother-bird ;
The fainting doe's retreat ;
And a shade, where the languid pilgrim loved
To cool his burning feet.

When the wizard-breath of Autumn shook
The ripe fruits heavily down ;
And the high-heaped wain rocked to and fro
In the harvest, rich and brown ;
A splendour fell upon us all—
'Twas gorgeous to behold
The tame green, dashed by the fiery hues
Of purple and of gold :
But our beauty waned, as the bright leaves whirled
In stormy eddies round ;
Or, loosening in the breathless air,
With a low complaining sound,
Dropped one by one reluctantly,
And slowly reached the ground.

When Winter toiled through the knee-deep snow,
And the winds went wailing by,
And the old discrownèd Year lay down
In the solitude to die—

On the forest-branches black and bare,
But the hoary moss was seen
With the woodbine's faded tapestry,
And the ivy ever green ;
Yet in bough and bole, through a hundred rings
The soul of beauty stirred,
To burst in a myriad fairy-stars,
When the voice of Spring was heard ;
As a lover's balmy thoughts rush forth
In many a glowing word.

Now Time moves onwards, led in turn
By the dark and shining hour ;
And I show, like a dreary face of Death
In Pleasure's glorious bower :
I bring a fear of the Autumn-time,
To the manhood of the year :
The sap runs not in my withered limbs,
My leaves are shrunk and sere ;
Nor have I strength to cast them off,
Though so frail a hold have they,
The lightest gust that stoops so low
May bear them all away,
To the cold wet ground, at length to feed
The Spirit of Decay.

A few more days shall bring the light,
And darken in the tree ;
And the elm-bough, once so beautiful,
The spoil of Death shall be :
Soundless and stirless, when the world
Wakes in the morning-sun,
Or sleeps at noon, in the glaring light ;
Or, when the day is done,
Lies in the glory of the dew,
Touched by the white moonbeam.
In the windy night, my dry dead leaves,
Restless, shall ever seem
Like the voice of Death, in the ear of Sleep,
Whispering a fearful dream.

The sweet bright flowers, in season, still
Shall spring in wood and field ;
The violets, as with love new-born,
Their inmost perfume yield ;
All day and night shall the hawthorn blow
To welcome in the May ;
Wild roses fill with lavish sweets
Each dusky woodland-way ;
And woodbines, climbing evermore
To the bright southern sun,

Clasp the green boughs with balmy trails
That blossom as they run ;
Yet weary of my fragile hold,
The broken-elm-bough shun.

Wild natures of the sylvan realm !
The rabbit and the hare
Shall play in the clustered fern and grass—
The brown deer's secret lair !
The squirrel's sharp and jocund cry
In the shadowy copse be heard ;
With the ring-dove's croon, and watch-words sweet
Of many a brooding bird ;
And the golden-girdled bee that makes
Sweet pleasure of all toil,
Where the white wood-blossoms shine and dance,
Keep up his happy coil ;
But steal not, as of old, from me
A rich and honied spoil.

And merry-hearted youth shall come,
With the basket and the crook,
For the bearded nut, and purple sloe
Ripening in secret nook—

To plunder the poor bird's happy nest
And hive of the forest bee—
Their joyous whoops of thoughtless mirth
Ringing from tree to tree,
A moment hushed, as the withered bough
Breaks on the startled eye—
'Twere a childish feat then to pull me down ;
And with triumphant cry,
To trail me at their own wild will,
In a distant place to lie.

But wherever I rest—at length become
The hoary lichens' prey—
My ruins shall bear to the mind of man
A lesson of Decay.
Thus fall the fairest boughs of Life—
Time ever will destroy
Desires and Hopes, the trembling buds
To the opening flowers of Joy :
All things of Earth must fade, and die,
Be they young, or passed their prime !
The mighty trunk—a thousand years
The lord of the forest-clime—
Must perish like the smallest leaf
In the burning breath of Time !

Aye! Death shall still the merriest voice—
The clearest eye bedim;
And make the stoutest heart to quail,
Nor battle do with him;
The good, the evil; the blithe, the sad;
The king by the beggar's side
Shall pass together through that gate
Wide as the world is wide;
For *all* the Earth is the Hunter's realm,
And he keenly doth pursue
The affrighted quarry *all* the year,
With his swift and silent crew—
Turn where ye may, his dark eye turns,
And the arrow pointeth true!

(1843.)

“WHEREFORE AND WHY!”

“O THE world is a happy and beautiful world!”

Said a child that I met by the way,
“For hark! how the wild winds rush through the pines;
And see how the sunlight dances and shines

Where the rippling waters stray.

O the woodlands are filled with wonderful things—
There the woodpecker taps, and the storm-throistle sings,

And the squirrels are ever at play:

There the startled water-hen claps her wings;

And the dragon-fly airy summersets flings;

And the trout breaks the pool into sparkling rings;

And the bulrush waves in the tangled springs,

Where the white-lily floats all day.”

“Ah! the world *is* a beautiful world,” I said,

“To a shadowless spirit like thine!”

As from forest and field, through the shining hours,

He heaped up his treasures of eggs and flowers,

And fairy-stones rare and fine.

At times, from copse and hollow, hard by,
 Rang out his blythe and exulting cry,
 Till the sunlight had ceased to shine :
 When the blue veil of twilight covered the sky,
 And the spirit-like stars came out on high,
 And slumber fell soft on his weary eye,
 Still he murmured—“ How fast the hours *do* fly
 For a life so happy as mine ! ”

“ O this world is a dark and wearisome world ! ”
 Said an old man I met by the way :
 “ I look on my lifetime of fourscore years,
 And alas ! what a picture of gloom it appears
 Scarce-touched by a golden ray !
 What fearful phantasies fill my brain ;
 For the past, with its visions of sorrow and pain,
 Still haunts me, by night and by day.
 What is Life, when our pleasures so quickly wane—
 When all that we toil for, and hope for, is vain !
 Ah ! long in the dreary church-yard have lain
 The friends of my youth ; and alone I remain—
 O would that I too were away ! ”

“ Ah ! this world *is* a wearisome world ! ” I said,
 “ To a spirit forlorn as thine ! ”

As slowly he toiled through the shining hours,
He saw not the twinkling leaves and flowers
 His tottering feet entwine ;
Dim shadows might waver, the rich light glow
On his wrinkled cheek, and the merry winds blow—
 But his eyes with no pleasure would shine :
When the round red sun was sinking low,
How sadly he shook his thin locks of snow,
And muttered—“ O would that I too might go—
I long to be gone ; but the hours are too slow,
 For a life so weary as mine !”

’Tis a wonderful world ! I say to myself,
 As I thoughtfully walk by the way—
Time flies ; and Eternity cometh up slow ;
The Earth groweth old, and what more do we know
 To-day than we knew yesterday ?
That if born, we may live, just a Mayfly’s flight,
Or the raven’s great circle span outright—
 Then die, be our time what it may :
That night follows morning ; and morning, the night—
After spring-time and summer, the autumn-blight
Brings black winter in ; but will Death first smite
The branch that for years hath basked in the light,
 Or the blossom new-born to-day ?

O the world goeth round from sun to sun—

Now moonlight—now starlight shine :

Surely wiser we grow—yet the “ wherefore and why”

That *this* thing or *that* thing is first to die,

Poor man hath no wit to divine.

The morning is breaking—the cock may crow ;

The rain and the wind may beat and blow ;

And the sky begin to shine ;

But the child so happy some hours ago

Is mute and blind, in Death lying low !

While the old man awakes, and rocks to and fro,

Still drearily moaning—“ O would I might go !

What a long weary life is mine !”

(1843.)

THE WOODLANDS.

COME to the woodlands! Summer hath unfurled
His glowing banner to the drowsy wind!
Leave for a while the stern ungentle world,
Where Love soon wearies, Friendship grows unkind!
Where the keen shafts of Care are thickly hurled,
Till unto Death the wounded heart hath pined.
Come, where broad boughs in twining arches meet;
And flowers, untroubled by the sultry heat,
Delay our willing feet—
Where Nature sits beside the hidden streams,
Filling the mid-day twilight with sweet sylvan dreams.

Pleasant our way shall be through winding alleys,
Whose leafy labyrinths lead to some green glade,
Where the wild brook, with murmuring music, sallies
From shade to sunlight, and again to shade;

Luring us down to far-off fragrant valleys,
 Where silent myriads bloom and softly fade.
 Oft on the woodland-verge, the radiant light
 Burns in the boughs, and feasts the sylvan night

With pictures rosy-bright—

'Of wood and wold, uplands with harvest crowned,
 Dim spires, and shining streams, and heaven's sapphire
 round.

Here the wild honeysuckles climb, and fold
 The gnarlèd boughs with spires and leafy knots ;
 And clustered blossoms, rich with ruddy gold,
 Veiling the light from green sequestered spots—
 Sweet trysting-places for young Love !—which hold,

Three seasons through, their soft enticing plots
 Of wild flowers, wooing the lone-wandering wind,
 'Mong shadowy boles and knotted roots entwined,
 To loiter, and unbind

Their perfumed sweets, and waft them lightly down
 The stony arteries of the hot and brooding town.

Here lonely byeways lead to some dark nook,
 Whose matted branches, drooping heavily down,
 Drift in the shineless waters of the brook,
 O'erhung with sombrous glooms and boskage brown—
 (Where woodmen saw, of old, with wildered look,
 The staring Sylvan weave his leafy crown)

By the slow current, full of swaling weeds,
Rich waterblooms, and fallen feathery seeds ;
 And where dry rustling reeds
And tangled swords of sedge wave to and fro' ;
And in the weird-like silence the white lilies blow.

What peaceful gladness crowns all sylvan lives !
 The ouzel's song, in a melodious breeze,
Blends with the woodspite's clamour, as he rives
 The withered bark ; and golden-armoured bees
With sounding trumpets, march from hidden hives
 To balmy underwoods and flowery leas :
And where the pine-bough holds her half-seen nest,
The ring-dove, troubled with some sweet unrest,
 Upbows her throbbing breast,
And quivering throat, emblazoned with rich rings—
With all the Summer brooding in her fluttered wings !

How the shy deer, hearing unwonted sound,
 Start from the dewy vert, and quickly turn
Their branching fronts, standing at gaze around—
 Lost in an instant 'mong the waving fern :
The lithesome squirrels throng the mossy ground ;
 And dormice, straying from their woody bourne,
Steal back, if but a bough soft-lifted shake ;

Their dream-like flight, the golden pheasants take
 Out of the flowering brake ;
 And happy love-notes fill the quiet air—
 For every tuft of leaves is some glad creature's lair !

Soon might the woods seem haunted, as of old,
 With light-veiled Nymphs and dreaming Deities—
 Such spots of marvellous beauty we behold,
 Where light and shadow battle in the trees,
 Whose shining openings shape Noon's gorgeous gold
 To wondrous semblance (as the eye may please)
 Of leaf-entwined staff, and wide-mouth'd horn ;
 And the tossed wine-cup by mad Mænads borne,
 When, with bright hair unshorn,
 Young Bacchus revelled ; and Pan's lusty band
 Trampled with hornèd heels the echoing wild wood-land.

A sleight of Fancy ! in a moment, lo !

The dizzy Satyrs their swift circles trace :
 Pipe the shrill reed—the trumpet, loudening, blow—
 Startling the brown deer with a sound of chace !
 Down the dark aisles the twining dancers go,
 By softly-chiming springs, where, with white face,
 Peers the lone Naiad through the water-leaves ;
 And where sweet coronals the Dryad weaves ;
 While all the woodland heaves

With the wild winy revel, till the eye
Lose the dim dream, the lingering spirit-echoes die!

When through the deepening shadows of the night
Heaven's argent crescent shoots its steadfast rays,
And all wet leaves seem twinkling drops of light!—
Fond Phantasy still holds the tranced gaze;
For lo! the Fairy-folk, with harness bright,
Flashing along a hundred forest-ways;
And up lone-lying hollows, far and near,
Upon the wind the sweet bells jingle, clear;
And sounds delight the ear,
As some wild rite of the old Fairy-time,
Still swelled with shout and music blythe to morning-prime.

Fair woodland-haunt of Childhood's happy hours—
How oft in Spring, and murmurous Summer-time,
And solemn Autumn, in these haunted bowers,
Humming my earnest thoughts in sounding rhyme,
Have I long-lingered, nursing Life's bright powers
In the rich quiet of this sylvan-clime;
Where the sharp tears of Sorrow cease to start—
Where Care soon wearies, 'gainst the charmed heart
To launch his blunted dart;
For Joy (sole gossip of the smiling day!)
Here lulls old Time to sleep, and steals his scythe away.

(1840-4.)

SUMMER TWILIGHT.

In early June, the bright mid-time of Summer,
In the soft passage of the twilight hour ;
How deep a quiet steals upon the spirit,
With the light dew that fills the pining flower.

The Evening-hour, when our great mother Nature,
Lieth entranced in thoughtful calm delight,
Under the leaves, with gentle arms encircling
The wearied day, and soft-uprising night.

The sweet mid-time, when Earth's glad heart is trembling,
Stirred by the warm bright rains and brooding heat ;
And through the rich May-grass, in childlike wonder,
Steals happy June, with light bewildered feet.

O ye twin-spirits of Twilight and of Summer!

Your mingled charms my willing feet have brought
To the green fields, where man's wild voices never
Troubled the charmed sources of life and thought

And where the impassioned soul delights to gather
Fancies of spiritual beauty—thoughts intense!
Listening to nature's soothing, solemn tidings,
At the dim portals of each earthly sense.

What harvests thence shall rise, in ten-fold splendour,
To feast and comfort life's dark after-days;
Sweet, as in times of primal pain and sorrow,
Memories of Eden, and God's ancient ways.

The shining fields, the fair unfolding valleys,
Still bear the impress bright of feet divine—
At all times lovely; but how wondrous lovely,
When far and wide the evening-glories shine!

While softly ebbs the golden tide of sunlight,
What strange bright fields of splendour fill the sky,
Like marvellous glimpses of those "happy islands,"
Far-off enchanting the sad seaman's eye.

Along the upland-wolds and forest summits,
The sunset trails its scattered flakes of fire,
And centring brightly in the broad mid-valley
Steeps in white light the airy village spire.

Slowly the sun descends—in gold and purple
Royally clothed, like nature's King and Priest—
His glowing arms outstretched in benediction
On all the nations of the darkening East.

Yet lingering thus, we know the calm bright morning
Spans the broad seas, and fills the western clime—
Emblem of Him, in whose eternal presence,
Swell and return the circling rings of Time.

Go forth, O sun! upon thy high evangel
Of life and love undying—awhile depart :
Thy farewell beams shall yield immortal pleasures—
The sweet birth-right of many a kindly heart.

The light fades sensibly ; Heaven's rosy arches
Deepen to purple darkness over all ;
The white cliff gleams not on the dusky upland ;
Nearer and nearer the long wood-shadows fall.

The witch-elms blacken, and the wayside poplars,
With ever-trembling leaves that love the light,
Glisten no more : the mystic wand of twilight
Subdueth all things unto its sweet might.

The chesnut's fragrant spires, rich lilac-clusters
Crowning fair gardens, and all shining blooms
Unsealed by nightly dews, grow dim and weirdlike,
Nestling among the thickening under-glooms.

How sweet to feel, in this inscrutable darkness
Of shadow upon shadow lying deep,
The ceaseless fragrance (nature's purest incense)
Doth, all night long, its way to heaven keep.

For night already fills the dim-seen valleys,
The spinneys ever dark, grow darker still :
The rippling gold fades softly from the waters,
As the last sun-gleam streaks the distant hill.

A night all twilight ! vague soft threads of colour
(Beams of the triple-element) lingering, burn ;
As, in the starry lap of Darkness, slumbered
The sunlight, until Morning's swift return.

A pleasant gloom ! for the white flag of moonlight
Waves not in solemn beauty o'er these skies,
That sweetly realise some fair child-vision
Of shadowy wings, and fond-regarding eyes.

It is the hour, when nature's free wild offspring
Seek the warm nest of Love—the leafy lair :
Soft feet along the sylvan sward are stealing ;
And softer wings flit down the silent air.

All heaven and earth grow still ! a balmy quiet,
By light, uncertain noises, an instant stirred—
Like wasting circles of rich and distant music ;
Or whispers in our own hushed spirits heard.

Sounds that make silence more and more impressive,
After the clanging noise of mid-day life ;
Sweet as the heart's true voice of gentle kindness,
To the old fond words returning after strife.

At times, familiar sounds arise around me—
The sudden boom of the belated bee ;
The mingled murmur of myriad dancing units ;
The loving watch-words in the twilight-tree.

And happy haunting sounds of dew light-falling
From leaf to leaf, and whisperings of the air ;
Soft as the voice of childhood, sleep-o'ertaken,
Breathing sweet household words of praise and prayer.

In this hushed calm of summer and of twilight,
Arise rich sounds that but to night belong :
Voices, all mute among day's mingled voices,
Steep the wide realms of air in floods of song.

Hark to the wood-lark in the starry darkness—
The sylvan spirit of the summer-night
Singing unseen—the very heavens tremble
In that wild stress of rapturous delight.

And yet a wealthier strain of passionate music,
The nightingale sings in the lowly thorn—
A farewell solemn, swelling into triumph,
That her young brood shall greet the golden morn.

And from the dusky pinewood, plaintive noises
Betray the brooding fancies of the dove ;
The night-jar's dreamy voice floats down the orchard
Blent with the owl's wild cry of earnest love.

And sounds of human neighbourhood mingle ever :
The watch-dog bays : and from the hillside starts
The chiding echo ; then the darkling village
Lifts the last-swelling psalm of thankful hearts.

The church-clock strikes : for Time, the mighty seraph,
Whose flying feet never on earth alight,
Sweeps on ; and suddenly in the summer darkness
Smites with mailed hand the sounding doors of night.

Those absolute sounds, and lingering undulations,
Wrestling in sleep with the dream-laden brain,
Shall be to some, like Autumn's thronging thunders—
To some, the silvery lapse of Summer rain.

Sound on, O Time ! hold the enchanted spirit
With varying dreams, in sweet or fearful thrall ;
Or crowd the waking sense with flickering memories—
Sun-streaks and shadows on the soul's white wall.

Grief starts and moans—a precipice of darkness
Looms up between her and the fair dream-land ;
Whilst happy youth, late-flying from the tempest,
Now rounds the rich light in his rosy hand.

Fond Hope is eager for her sunny journey—

Lo! sharp rains hiss, and wild winds clang the door;
The bright fruits slip from Infancy's light fingers—
A new dream comes, budding and ripening more!

Love dreams of joy-bells ringing gaily—gaily—

Foredating some sweet morrow of delight;
While Filial Love, 'mong death-bed shadows seated
Tearfully counts the awful pulse of night.

Fear wakes and listens, as a felon listens

The hammer clanging out life's wasted prime;
But Faith, upborne in Heavenly Vision, heareth
Faint echoes only of the voice of Time.

That voice is still! the flood of awful silence

O'ersweeps the airy bound of night and morn;
But to the inner ear those sounding circles
Shall still roll on, and break on years unborn.

The silence, deepened by that tongue of iron,

Swoops down from yon wild round of wood and wold;
But its stern power is broken by soft voices—
The wild-bird's song—the bleating from the fold!

Dread were this darkness, that great solemn circle
Whose centre seemeth this poor soul of mine;
But that a wondrous ring of steadfast glory,
Resting on Earth, girds me with strength divine.

That midnight strain—that bleat of fond reliance—
Bring thoughts of One, our Father-friend away;
That solemn splendour on the far horizon,
Burns with bright glimpses of the Eternal Day.

How in the dead night-hours come to the spirit,
Visions of what hath been, and what shall be!
The glooms and grandeurs of the hoary ages,—
The Golden Time that later eyes shall see.

There, the wild revels round lascivious idols—
The shining Cross borne over fields of blood;
Here, the sweet incense of earth's mingled voices,
Lifted to One, All-wise, All-great, All-good.

There, pale thin spectres thronging leaguered cities,
Fire-wasted fields, and reeking battle-grounds;
Here, happy homesteads, window-deep in harvests,
And thriving towns—one hum of pleasant sounds.

The sword's sharp eloquence—the insolent trumpet
 Stilled at Love's challenge, potent-sweet and kind ;
Squalor, and sin, and deathly darkness, flying
 Before the eternal morning of the mind.

O Time, thou voyager by that vast river,
 Whose silent currents onward roll and sweep,
From the bright well-head of the forfeit Eden,
 Down—ever down to the Eternal Deep.

When, with thy marshalled hosts of deathless spirits,
 Will thy long voyage cease for evermore—
Thine awful argosy of mortal passions
 Landed before the Lord of that dim shore ?

Son of Eternity ! world-warring Angel !
 When, with faint-faltering feet, and eye grown dim,
Wilt thou find rest—put off thy battered harness—
 Where flowers ambrosial soothe each bruised limb ?

Read we aright, O Time, thine hourly warning !
 The nights pass swiftly by, the long days cease ;
Soon shall we enter, weary way-worn pilgrims,
 The gates of that Great City of Love and Peace.

There, filled with perfect bliss, in heavenly places,
By service sweet fulfilling His decrees—
Thou shalt be to us like an old-world minstrel
With sad-sweet songs and lingering memories.

Memories of fruitless hopes, and passionate sorrows,
And fears, and all the Spirit's awful strife ;
With sweeter memories of that dreary Chaos
Pierced by the glowing breath of Higher Life !

Then shall we see what here is faintly dreamed-of,
That angel-powers are ever round our feet ;
And in the God-given cup of Life is trembling
The bitter drop to make the sweet more sweet.

And though oftimes on earth we pine and murmur,
Seeing with sullen eyes, nor Good, nor Right ;
Then shall we feel this mighty round of Darkness,
A hand's-breadth shadow in the boundless Light.

Thus speaks "the better voice," when weary-hearted
We find Life's path-ways Winter-dark and cold ;
And yearn again, with childhood's eager fingers,
To clutch at flowers in sparkling heaps of gold !

Thus speaks—in darker and dread-flying moments,
When the vexed soul rebels 'gainst His great Breath,
Wild-wishing, Life were one bright Summer sparkle,
Out-trampled by the dusty heels of Death.

Drear thoughts unborn through all this tranquil season,
When the calm soul hath keys of wondrous might,
Soft-stirred to harmonies, divine and glorious,
By the fond fingers of the Summer-night.

O breathing silence! beating heart of Quiet!
Hushing the querulous thought to dreams sublime:
Sweet solemn Presence! something heavenly-holy
Bringing again the Angel-days of Time!

Spirit-like, in the circling arch of Heaven
We feel our Life grow wondrous large and strong;
Its secret wells, Earth's fallen sphere o'erflowing,
In waves of living glory roll along.

Entranced, we hear the ceaseless inner-voices
Of all things—lo! a mightier voice doth call
From the four quarters of the midnight heavens
Divine and sweet, and sounding-on through all!

And from yon starry threshold, ever blowing
Soft airs of Heaven, in balmy currents, beat :
World-pilgrims we, through regions wild and lonely,
Cheering our weary way with odours sweet.

We see the long dark days of brooding Sorrow
Sink down to happy calms and lovely eves—
His bounteous blessings, falling, unobtrusive,
Like dew-drops on the dry sun-smitten leaves.

Strengthened by claspings of a Hand Almighty,
All earthly things have Heaven at their core ;
And in the lavish element of Mercy
The Earth is sweeping onwards evermore.

O night of steadfast calm, and haunted twilight,
Lifting our souls from sphere to brightening sphere—
We mount with reverent feet the Empyrean ladder
On whose far summit loving hands appear,

Calling us home—for in our mortal bosom
There throbs a Spirit born not with our birth,
A spark of subtle fire—a seraph-splendour
Thrills the dry bones, and binds the dust of earth.

Earthwards we came, shorn of our forfeit glories,
To live our Life, and His great way complete :
Erelong returned, to sweep through harps of Heaven
Æonian anthems, wondrous, grand, and sweet.

Beyond the shock of Time—the bounds of Darkness—
Far down the Ages shall the tidings run
Ever and onward—the Great Triune Mystery—
The unsealed mystery of His dying Son.

(1844.)

JOB XXXVIII.

FROM A NEW AND LITERAL TRANSLATION OF THE BOOK
OF JOB, FROM THE ORIGINAL HEBREW, INTO
ENGLISH BLANK VERSE.

VERSE.

1. JEHOVAH from the tempest answered Job,
2. And said, Who *is* this that maketh counsel dark,
By speeches lacking knowledge? Pray-thee now,
3. Bind-up thy loins like a strong-man, for I
Demand of thee, and do thou make Me known!
4. Where wast thou at the Foundings of the Earth?
Declare, if knowledge thou indeed dost know!
5. Who set its measures?—seeing that thou knowest!
Or who stretched over it the boundary-line?
6. On what were its foundations sunk, or who
Laid down the corner-stone thereof, the while
7. The stars of Morning altogether sang,
And all the sons of ELOHIM shouted loud!
8. And *who* shut-in the sea with folding-gates;
When it burst-forth, outflowing from the womb.

VERSE.

9. *And* when I made a cloud its covering,
And darkness flowing-down its swaddling-band ;
10. And I brake up my graven-line of *Earth*
Above it, and placed a bar and folding-gates,
11. And said, Unto this point thou comest, but
Thou shalt not add thereto ; this bound is set
Against the swelling pride of thy great waves.
12. —From *the beginning of thy days*, didst thou
Command the Morning ? *or* make the dawning light
13. To know his station, *thence* to seize upon
The out-spread borders of the Earth, whereby
The Evil-doers are shaken out of her ?
14. She turneth under, like the potter's clay
Unto the mould, and *things* uplift-themselves,
Like as it were a garment *covering her* ;
15. But from the Evil-doers their *share of light*
Is holden back, and broken the strong arm
16. In casting forth *the spear*. Hast thou gone down
Unto the winding inlets of the Sea,
Or in the unsounded hollow of the Deep
17. Hast thou proceeded ? Were the doors of Death
Laid open unto thee, and didst thou see
18. The doors of the Shadow of Death ? Didst thou descry
The uttermost expanses of the Earth ?
Declare, if thou dost know the whole thereof !
19. *Say*, which way doth the Light retire to rest ;

VERSE.

20. And Darkness—which his station? Seeing that
 Thou ledest him unto his utmost bound,
 And also knowest the pathways of his house—
21. Knowest thou because thou wast begotten then,
 And that the number of thy days *is* great?
22. Hast thou gone into the treasuries of snow,
 And hast thou seen the treasuries of hail,
23. Which I reservèd for the *Wintry* time
 Of binding-up *the Earth*, and for the day
 Of seizing and devouring *its green things*?
24. In what way is the Light apportioned out
So evenly; *how* scattereth it abroad
25. The East-wind on the Earth? Who hollowed out
 A channel for the overflowing rain,
 And for the piercing shaft of thunders a track?
26. To bring rain on the Earth *where* no man *is*,
 The Wilderness wherein *there is* no man;
27. To saturate the place of shattered rocks,
 And land by fire convulsed, and *so* to cause
 The fertile spot of tender green to spring.
28. Is there a father to the rain; or who
 Hath made the drops of dew to be brought forth?
29. Out of whose womb hath issued forth the ice;
 And the hoar frost *that falleth from* the heavens
30. Who hath engendered? *When* the waters in
 The likeness of a stone conceal themselves,

VERSE.

- And when* the faces of the Deep cling fast
31. Unto each other? Hast thou *also* bound-up
The genial motions of the Summer-heat
Or loosed the nipping-blasts of Winter-cold?
32. Didst thou bring back the distant scattered winds
Each in his season; and didst thou lead forth
The wasting Northern Wind with *all* his sons?
33. Knowest thou the statutes of the Heavens? Didst thou
Really ordain their sovereignty on Earth?
34. Hast thou uplifted to the heavy cloud
Thy voice of thunder; and the overflow
35. Of waters—doth it cover thee? Dost thou
Send forth the lightnings, and do they go forth,
36. And say to thee, Behold us! Who displayed
His Wisdom in the colouring of the clouds,
Or who gave to *their* sculptured forms *His* skill?
37. Who numbereth *their* watery atoms by
His Wisdom; and the falling showers of Heaven
38. Who bringeth down, when the small vaporous dust
Is fused into a molten mass, and when
The drops do cling together?

* * * The words printed in *italic* are not in the Hebrew Text; they are inserted to make the sense clearer to the English reader, after the manner of the Authorized Version.

AUTUMN THOUGHTS.

It is the time—the solemn Autumn-time,
When the rich world of Summer must decay :
The wild fruits fall—o'erpast their mellow prime ;
And some sweet race of flowers dies every day ;
And o'er the wide grey meadows, thick and fast,
Drift the dead forest-leaves, caught by the wailing blast.

O'er hill and vale, a restless spirit broods—
Sad-haunting noises fitfully rise and fall,
Heart-touching, bringing us in solemn moods,
To muse on worldly joys gone past recall :
To count life's mispent hours (heaven's precious boon!)
And hours ere Death to come, and vanish just as soon.

The bright Time-present soon becomes the Past—
Far-off, a glittering point of lingering thought !
The years flit by ; the Future comes at last,

And with it, Death ! and all our dreams are nought !
So short our life, but glimmering motes are we—
A little sunshine-dance, and out of sight we flee !

Death's shadowy finger ever moving round,
To every point of time must surely go ;
But none knoweth when shall his last summons sound—
In childhood's ear it may be whispered low ;
Or from the banquet start the wedding-guest ;
Or in fond friendly voice, call good old age to rest.

We die each hour we live ! Life's secret wells
Waste in calm-taken breath or heart-deep sighs,
Even as the wind-borne sound of clanging bells,
In lingering lessening murmurs softly dies ;
Yet in light sports we waste the flying hours,
Thoughtless, as children are, in churchyards gathering
flowers.

Life hath its lavish Spring-time ; day and night
Yielding each yearning sense all-glorious dowers—
Its Summer, rich with many a calm delight ;
Love's balmy feelings, Mind's immortal powers—
But let us meanwhile for the morrow care,
Lest the wild Autumn-weather smite us unaware.

For Life and Death together once must meet
In each man's time—the end of all his years !
We revel gaily, so the hours run fleet :
We measure their slow steps with trickling tears :
We sleep, and nothing know—but Time steals by !
An hour comes, when the world slips from us, and we die !

Aye ! all are thine, inexorable Death—
The dear familiar forms, the hearts of worth :
Dread spirit, withering with thy wizard-breath
The fairy-circle of the happiest hearth ;
Scattering the light so richly wont to shine ;
Breaking the tendrils sweet that heart to heart entwine.

Thine is the slumbering babe, whose innocent smiles,
To this poor world bring gleams of Heaven near ;
The happy youth, whom fairy-lore beguiles
His little golden Babels oft to rear :
And the fond maiden, in whose tearful eyes
Time sits, Love-charmed, and weaves his sweet false
prophecies.

Thine is the mother too, whose priceless worth
Makes thoughtful children dream of those old days,
When Angels folded their bright wings on earth ;

And thine is manhood, up Life's mountain-ways,
Great-hearted, toiling on ; or bowed with years,
Winning rich gleams of Hope through Memory's stormy
tears.

To all Earth's children comes this equal fate,
Or clothed in purple or in hodden-grey ;
The beggar's staff, the sceptral sign of state,
Alike at thy stern summons cast away :
Here, the green weeds ; there, blazon'd banners wave,
What finds the battening worm but dust in either grave ?

How vain, Ambition ! dreaming of trampled crowns,
And world-wide conquests, lo ! the dreamer's dead !
And Power—not armies vast, nor bastion'd towns,
Guard from thy dread assault the conqueror's head !
Through armour-of-proof thy touch as easily goes
As to the little heart beneath the cradle-clothes.

Affection's tears can nought with thee avail ;
Nor Beauty dazzle thee with her bright eye ;
Thou wilt not hearken to Love's fervent tale,
Nor Virtue's voice—the fated one must die !
Youth mocks thee vainly ; no Médéan power
Hath wise Old Age, to stay the dark-descending hour.

A little while—although my life hath told
Its golden prime alone, I too may go !
The spring-time rain shall loose the churchyard-mould ;
Balm-breathing airs of Summer o'er me blow ;
Between the graves, the drifted leaves lie deep ;
And the snow fall ; while I—I shall be dead-asleep !

A little while, and haply I may lie
Where no fond tears may on my face be shed ;
No kiss bring comfort—no heart-stricken cry
Of those I love, arouse me from my bed :
A short time longer—young and old shall go
Beside my grave, and none shall heed who there lies low !

Yet still I live : aye ! years may yet be mine,
And soft desires mature to rich delights ;
Love lead me where the lavish Summers shine :
Or sorrows beat like dark December-nights
My weary staggering spirit, till the end
Shall be a thing desired—and Death, a welcome friend !

Sad thoughts assail me now, by night and day ;
For Death hath stricken those I dearly love ;
Alas ! no power his fearful course can stay—

No wail of anguish, touch of pity move !
When his dread shadow stalketh through the room,
Shall mortal hand beat back the Heaven-strung shaft of
doom?

First a dear Sister died ; a gentle child
Whom once to love was to love evermore—
Ah me ! to miss thy prattling sweetly-wild,
And think all thy soft winning ways are o'er ;
And but in dreams, to see thy blue eyes shine,
And feel thy little fondling arms my neck entwine !

How like thy namesake, wert thou, darling “Rose” —
As beautiful, and in thy life as brief !
It but a little shower and sunshine knows,
And dieth even in the opening leaf—
Thou mightest not o'erpass that circle sweet
Of hours Elysian, drawn round childhood's fairy feet !

Dying, without a wrinkling touch of Care ;
Ere Sin could lure thee with her silvery tongue ;
Ere Grief, forestalling Time, could blanch thine hair ;
Or Fears, soul-scaring, haunt thee all night long—
Dear one, gone home ; we will not weep for thee :
Thy tears for us should fall, if tears in Heaven can be !

And then my Mother died—O, there is naught
More bitter for the youthful heart to know!
How hard to seize the slow bewildering thought,
And feel that one so loved is lying low:
Though boding years of suffering and of care
Had dimmed her lustrous eye, and Autumn-touched her
hair.

What pictured memories of the past arise,
Like sun-gleams breaking through a cloud of tears!
I see her now, with childhood's sparkling eyes—
Now with the thoughtful gaze of riper years;
In joy, how happy-hearted; and in sorrow,
How patient-sweet and hopeful for the brighter morrow!

Never could we requite thee, Mother dear,
E'en with a life-long term of loving thought,
For all thy lavish care from year to year,
Since first within us Life's keen motions wrought:
A larger life we need—a happier clime:
Our heart's deep currents break the measured marge of
Time!

For one bright smile of thine, like those of old,
O I could press through Death's mysterious gloom!
A thousand joys might loosen from my hold

But once to grasp thine hand beyond the tomb—
To feel thy kiss upon my happy cheek,
Or in the old sweet voice of earth to hear thee speak.

Ah! fond desires to no sure issue brought—
The eagle-will out-soars Life's earthy powers :
Thy wishéd presence must alone be sought
In the dim track of Memory's treasured hours :
Or in lone watches of the night, we meet
Where Heaven's bright threshold draws my dream-
enchanted feet.

O happy memories of the Orient dawn
Of Life, sun-steeped, sparkling with rosy showers,
When Time hath all the Elysian light withdrawn,
And the moonlit melancholy eve is ours,
In thoughts and dreams, your spirit-splendours rise
And all the bright old mornings throng the tearful eyes.

Time, as in pity, loves to keep awhile
Life's desert rich with Memory's vernal stream ;
Bright visions now bring back her gentle smile,
Chasing the shadows of some cradle-dream :
Or rosy flecks of sunshine warmly rest
On her dear face, and mine soft-pillowed on her breast.

Or kneeling by her immemorial chair,
In the red firelight of our cottage-hearth,
We breathe to heaven each simple household prayer—
The purest incense of the fallen earth !
Sweet dew of prayer and praise, by night and day,
Returned in blissful showers on all Life's after-way.

Fond thought still deems that home an Eden-nook,
Where the hushed wings of angels ever-stirred—
Sweet memories clustering round the Holy Book,
With her dear voice impressed on each bright word ;
Bringing to hours of thought a heavenly calm,
Clothing Life's arid waste with fountain and green palm.

Unfading memories these, O mother mine !
Cheering our way along the lonely land,
Mingled with vision-gleams of forms divine—
A shining crowd ! and one fond beckoning hand
Calling us up the starry heights above,
Nor Death, nor that Great Life breaking the bonds of
Love !

Filled with the summer-calm of perfect bliss,
I know thy yearning heart will still find room,
For all beloved on earth—thou would'st not miss

One cherished flower, plucked for a darker doom :
Surely so sweet a pleader shall prevail—
Thy tears, if heard on earth, shall they in Heaven fail !

How great thy Love, that thus thy spirit clings
To all beloved, suffering and lingering here !
That still the shadow of thy seraph-wings
Is over us—thy sweet voice ever near—
Constraining us on Life's uncertain way,
So that our oft-enticèd feet go not astray.

Once in my childhood, I lay near to death,
(All wan and drooping, Spring-time's golden flower !)
How sweet to think a mother's prayerful breath
Thrilled to the trembling core with wondrous power :
Surely the spirit, that then had gone before,
Shall yet with spotless wings 'light on that happy shore !

Surely the Life then spared shall here be stirred
To glorious issues in the Almighty's hand !
Each golden precept, and each earnest word—
Immortal seed broad-cast upon the land—
Through the dim years, in harvests deep to rise,
And ever shine above in thy clear spirit-eyes.

Like Pilgrim, wrapt in trancèd thought intense,
I fain would see the shining mountains gleam—
A glory, dazzling to all mortal sense ;
More lovely than the Poet's fairest dream !
There by the living streams, 'mong forms divine
Unutterable delights for evermore are thine.

Waking from happy dreams, sometimes I feel
Glimpses by night of thee are kindly given—
No striving thought can all the truth reveal ;
Soon from the light, the baffled sense is driven ;
And but a lingering heavenly smile doth tell
In sweet and earnest way that all indeed is well.

Ah me ! Life's troubled ways have kept my feet
From sad-sweet pilgrimage to thy distant grave ;
I can but picture grass and wild flowers sweet—
Sole epitaph above thy dust to wave !
And yet what need of more—thy virtues here
Are on the fond hearts' tablets written, Mother dear !

No pictures carry down the after-years
The limning of thy mild and earnest face ;
But evermore even through rising tears

'Tis sweet, in Memory's glass, thy form to trace :
The years may pass, and all that love thee die,
Thy features lost to earth shall shine beyond the sky.

Thy glowing smile, that oft was clouded here,
Is now eternal beauty on thy brow ;
Thy voice so potent-sweet on Earth to hear,
O could we hear its thrilling eloquence now !
Life's sufferings ended—the wild warfare done—
The life of deathless life thy happy soul hath won.

Why should dark fancies of the grave appal—
Think we of that which goes not to the ground ;
For if Life's marvellous house to ruin fall,
The Spirit is lord of realms eternal crowned.
Even so the amaranth's sweetness fills the skies
When the sere-stricken plant down earthward droops
and dies !

Death is called Night ; but oh ! 'tis like the night —
Earth's shadow lost in one eternal day !
Life ends not then, but doth begin aright
Clothèd in splendour fading not away :
Breaking the sevenfold bands of Time, at length,
The soul, like Sampson, wakes, glowing with giant-strength.

(1844.)

THE EARLY VIOLET.

I.

Would that the balmy days of Spring were come !
My heart's sick pulse beats wearily to and fro ;
While Earth is lying cold and deathly-dumb,
Wrapt in white cerements of the Wintry snow,
O sweetest of all sweet-recurring times—
Thou bright and earnest childhood of the Year,
How childlike-earnest I with passionate rhymes,
Would smite and pierce old Winter's frozen ear ;
 And call from deepest Chaos drear
Of night-like Day, and white-bewildering night,
Thy warm and mellow eyes, and morns of lavish light.

II.

Arise, O spirit of Spring, with fervent song
 Sweep o'er yon lone white wold and woodland bleak :
 With soft magnetic touches, thrill and throng
 Each sluggard sense, and flush the pallid cheek.
 Break-up the barren silence ; chill and mute
 Even the stormcock shuns the rushing rain ;
 Alone the robin pipes his piteous flute,
 Charmed by the far-off glimmering casement-pane—
 Nor pipes to my lone ear in vain—
 And dusky hordes of wild-fowl, hungry and spare,
 From frozen mountain-meres, driven seaward, clang the
 air.

III.

When I look forth, thoughtful, to see where lie
 The old familiar places of my love—
 Wide wastes, slow-drifting, circle my sad eye,
 With swirling storms of snow and sleet above—
 A dreary realm, where no soft shadows fall ;
 No sounds arise, save whispers from afar
 Heard spirit-deep, as Time should wearily call
 To silence wearier—We only are !
 Nor sun, or moon, or lonely star
 Comfort the desolate land ; and his white head
 Weird Winter lays along the grave of all things dead.

IV.

Sometimes of all his Titan splendour shorn
Rises the Sun, a phantom red and strange ;
And Nature, roused from deathlike trance forlorn,
Leaps staggering forth in wild and wondrous change :
The Nor'winds rage—the rains plunge heavily past
Through dreary gulfs of melancholy sound ;
And sad shrill noises pierce the sullen blast
Like cries of spirits, from airy shores profound
 Dashed headlong to the dismal ground—
Whirled o'er wild crags and chasms and forests stark :
While day gropes blindly down from dark to deeper dark.

V.

O for a potent spell, to shape awhile
A gorgeous pageant of enchanted days,
When Hope—the Ariel of Life's lonely isle—
Charmed with sweet airs down childhood's flowery maze !
O that on plumes of swift and silent thought,
In wide and widening rings, my soul would rise
Over these late-dark days, till memory caught
Far off, the marvellous gleams of sunset-skies ;
 Thence fondly feasting her lone eyes
With all the spirit-splendours of the past,
That on the years unborn their rosy reflex cast.

VI.

It may not be—sharp pains assail my heart.
And deeper shadows settle on my soul ;
Veiling the vision of its sunny start
On that great race which hath no earthly goal :
In Memory's shadowy masque, I see alone
Hopes, wisp-like, dancing on the gulf Despair ;
Fair Friendships, with the Summer-swallow flown ;
And Sickness, sharing with her sister Care,
 The bitter crust—the lenten fare !
And Death, late-calling those I love away ;
And all the ambushed armies that our Life waylay.

VII.

When will the slow hours bring that time again
Whose breath shall loose this sullen Death-in-Life—
Whose voice in all the chambers of the brain
Shall rouse the spirit-echoes rich and rife ?
Would I, in pensive parle of earnest thought,
Magician-like, the future years forecast,
Suddenly all bright phantasies are brought
To blear confusion ; blast and wilder blast,
 Whirling in circles wild and vast,
Drive the thick-hurrying rain and ringing hail,
On my lone roof all day, and all night long prevail.

VIII.

I yearn for Spring ; and ah ! 'tis not in vain—
A little gentle voice doth softly steal
O'er the wild hurley of the wind and rain,
And once again the old blythe pulse I feel !
Before me starts an apparition bright—
The Early Violet ! herald of the hours
When rosy vapours meet the morning-light
O'er molten snows, and disenchanting flowers
Of frost descend in silvery showers—
Blessings on that dear hand which gathered thee,
Sweet forest-flower, charmed root of Life and Love
to me !

IX.

In the wild lap of rugged Winter nursed,
Thy fairy-fingers with a touch unbind
Earth's stubborn thrall ; thy subtle breathings burst
The sterile barriers of the Norland wind—
Leading along the land, by farm and fold,
Through dingles green, thy shrinking sisters—soon
Shall Man and Nature sweet communion hold
Upon the hills at morn ; in woods at noon ;
Or where, all night, the mellow moon
Dips her white pillar in the restless wave ;
And tracts of star-lit bloom bind Winter in his grave !

X.

With fervent prophecies the sense o'erwhelm—
 For soon shall Spring unto the Earth return,
 Even as a ghost from Hades' hidden realm,
 Thrilled by the nectar-drop from his dark urn :
 Erelong the pulse of Nature full and large
 Shall beat her airy bounds ; Heaven's arches glow ;
 And wandering waters, dashed from marge to marge,
 Loosen the tangled flags from ice and snow :
 And tinkling rills begin to flow
 Through smouldering drifts ; and flying shafts of light,
 Sharpened and swift, wide wold and upland-forest smite.

XI.

O joy, to realise Spring's rosy dawn !
 When the meek spirit of the Sunbeam weaves
 Rich fancies on the vernal Earth, indrawn
 Through the fine fibres of the flowers and leaves ;
 When the warm dews, cleaving the gnarled bark,
 Break the brown rings where years embalméd lie ;
 And showers, with flickering spears of light and dark,
 On windy chariots swiftly whirl and fly ;
 Or haply, Heaven sails calmly by
 With starry argosies from shore to shore,
 While Earth, unseen, to some bright goal glides evermore.

XII.

Bright harbinger of Spring! fain would I follow
 In thy delicious footsteps, full of Hope
 For balmy days, by bush and briary hollow
 Dimpling with sylvan gloom the shining slope—
 'Neath twilight under-roofs of cloistered green,
 Where glades lie glimmering to the circling hours—
 Green fanes, o'er-arched with sun or starlight sheen,
 Where ferns heat-smitten, batten on sweet showers ;
 And moonlit weeds seem fair as flowers ;
 And on the murmuring boughs and mossy ground
 The rich rains flying fall with wild delicious sound.

XIII.

The golden Time returns—of storms o'erblown,
 When southerly pathways of the sun are seen
 In brightening rings ; and ridges, hard as stone,
 Are softly swathed in belts of gold and green ;
 When branches, white with starry knots of rime,
 Drop fruitful rains, melting the stubborn mould ;
 And shadows quickly fill the fragrant lime ;
 And scattered acorns at our feet unfold
 Slowly their shoots of rosy gold ;
 And maples crown the fields with dusky fires,
 And witch-elms flower, and pines expand their glistening
 spires.

XIV.

With lovely gleams of breathing bud and bloom,
 Shall my sad eyes be sweetly-startled oft,
 Should I, faint-footed, leave my lonely room
 To roam the garden or the orchard-croft—
 Fair snowdrops, on whose virgin-petals shine
 Hearts greenly-blazoned ; cowslip-clusters bright,
 Whose fragrant breath in beakers of bright wine
 Shall charm whole households, when the yule-log's light
 Flames down the drear white Winter-night ;
 And Childhood's favourite flowers in myriads seen—
 Long tracts of shining stars in realms of deepest green.

XV.

And wild-fires on the gleaming quarry-sides
 From tufted poppies ; and that golden star,
 Whose whitened orb, in the hot season, glides—
 A restless spirit o'er field and wood afar ;
 Wind-flowers and daffodils by mere and lake
 Wooing the breeze—sweet source of pensive rhyme !
 Dream-lorn primroses ; and the thorn that shakes
 Its bursting pearls in myriads for the time
 Of the May-morn's empurpled prime ;
 And sweet-briar sweeter that so soon it dies ;
 And fruit-trees scattering wide their fragrant prophecies.

XVI.

O golden Time, with garlands of bright flowers
Circling the Wintry wastes by day and night ;
O joyous Time, that doth enrich the hours
With bridal songs—rich dowries of delight !
Where crystal daggers shatter from the eaves,
Shall the blythe swallow build Love's nest of clay ;
The druid-wren her temple of green leaves
Shall fill with song ; the robin pipe all day
 In the old sweet familiar way ;
And ringdove-strains of rich and passionate tone,
Seem softened bugle-notes in far-off valleys blown.

XVII.

How sweet to hear, chiding the laggard morn,
The lark—sweet centre of wide spheres of song !
The nightingale, like some glad creature born
In Paradise, the old bright age prolong :
And in mid-stream, the warbling ouzel see
Breaking the water into sparkling rings ;
The linnet basking on the sunny tree,
And full of song, preening her happy wings ;
 And mark beside the woodland-springs,
On the mossed stone the silent halcyon sit,
Or like a spirit o'er the reedy marish flit.

XVIII.

The simple fly with murmuring wings shall break
 The Wintry silence, Lethe-like, and drear :
 The smallest stir of life shall help to make
 That harmony my soul delights to hear.
 The hum of wild bees in the flowering sallow
 Early at Love's sweet labour, full of mirth ;
 And sound of harness on the hillside fallow
 Shall tell how soon the rugged strength of earth,
 Subdued, shall bear a vernal birth,
 Whose fruitful harvests swelled by Breath sublime,
 Shall guard the soul's bright house in battle-days of Time.

XIX.

O beauteous flower ! how richly art thou crowned
 With early memories, liberal of Delight—
 Of seasons, when with every wandering sound,
 Came fairy-fancies, wondrous rich and bright :
 Voice unto voice seemed ever-calling sweet,
 From hidden dell and far-off shining steep—
 From streams on sedgy shores that idly beat
 With dreamlike noise ; from verdurous bosques that
 sleep,
 In sunshine soft, or shadow deep ;
 From nooks of twilight sown with stars and dews—
 Voices that all the sense would with great joy suffuse !

XX.

Again a boy—I climb the high hillside,
Breasting the wild shafts of the upland rain ;
Track the dark river through the woodland wide ;
Or thread the shadowy windings of the lane—
To find the fair-unfolding flowers that make
The joy and marvel of Life's early hours ;
To hear new voices in each bush and brake,
And stir of brooding wings in leafy bowers ;
Or over fields of clustered flowers
Follow the hawkmoth's voiceless wavering flight—
The thrice-born prophet of immortal life and light !

XXI.

Or lie in idlesse in some sunny glade,
(For sylvan pastime in a Pagan-land
A fitting scene) where flickering light and shade
Wrought fairer dreams than Prosper's airy wand—
There among flowers, unto my trancèd eye
Came the bright shapes of many an earthy creed ;
That float in air, and glisten in the sky,
Flash from the waters, breathe from flower and weed,
And smile in seas of harvest-seed,
Or make all night those spirit-startling sounds
That rise and fall, and linger in lone forest-grounds.

XXII.

These were but glittering motes of Heathendom—
 Delusive figments of old dreaming Time !
 Now, fairer visions with the violet come :
 Sweet solemn thoughts review Creation's prime :
 Visions of Chaos to its nether maze
 Pierced by God's breath, and the keen brand of Morn ;
 Of all the marvellous works of God's own days—
 Flowers and all fruitful trees in Eden born
 That ere their balmy leaves had worn
 One trembling raindrop, gleamed in Adam's eyes
 Opening upon the shining fields of Paradise.

XXIII.

Thoughts of the happy days ere Sorrow came,
 Ere Sin's dread shadow from that Garden fair
 Made dark the Earth, and the bright cherub-flame
 Drove out the Weepers to the common air :
 And thoughts of all the myriad sons of Earth,
 Toiling thenceforth in bitter sweat and tears ;
 Of pain and anguish in the hour of birth,
 And wearying sorrow through the after-years—
 Till Death shall loose with sudden shears
 Life's silver cord, or with a pitiless hand
 Tear slowly, one by one, each heart-inwoven strand.

XXIV.

Yet in this dreary world of Sin and Grief,
 Love's wondrous symbols shine upon the hours ;
 With the sharp thorn and bristling thistle-leaf,
 Bloom in due time all Eden's scattered flowers.
 When streams are black with frost, and ghostly-white
 Lie-field and wood, and wild rains sweep the wold ;
 The fruitful seasons, lavish of delight,
 Brood in the boughs and slumber in the mould—
 Aye! evermore the Earth is rolled
 Through shining spheres and balmy realms of air,
 For God is all-in-all, and Good lies everywhere !

XXV.

Though from the cradle to the open tomb,
 Sweet Love is chased by swifter-footed Sorrow,
 Yet oft she makes the pallid cheek rebloom,
 And crowns the dark night with a golden Morrow !
 And thus this lone-desponding heart of mine,
 With quickened sense thrills unto tidings sweet ;
 When flowers—bright relics of a world divine—
 Bring the old glories round our pilgrim-feet ;
 And with sweet voices oft-repeat
 The angel-breathings of that Garden fair,
 That God is all-in-all, and Good lies everywhere !

(1845.)

SHOULD the Author have the good fortune to meet with a fair encouragement from the Public, for his volume of EARLY POEMS—FOREST AND FIRESIDE HOURS—it is his intention, as soon as possible, to publish a Second Volume, entitled “PHEBE, OR THE SPIRIT OF MAY-EVE,” &c., being a Selection from his LATER POEMS, written between 1845 and 1853: dedicated, with permission, to his kind and esteemed friend, the Rev. ARTHUR BENONI EVANS, D.D., of Market Bosworth, Leicestershire.



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